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The Drum

Owen Sauerlender*

*Iowa State College

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The Drum

Owen Sauerlender

Abstract

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looked at Jim, and we started to talk to Mattie—so when he came to us we just said thank you and went right on talking.

It was really all right. I heard him talking to Professor Dodds over in the corner. They were talking about some philosophy. Something about a cave story. Like I told Jim when we got home—he was just trying to show off, probably. Probably read it just for that night. Nobody I know reads Pluto—or was it—no, it was Pluto, all right.

Well, Esther, that's really all there was. He sat over by the Dodds, and we sat on the davenport near the radio. And everything really went off very well, I thought. Like I told Jim—you have them with you in the navy, right on the same boat with you for months and months—I guess we can be broad-minded about a problem like this, just as well as anybody else. After all, that's why we're fighting this war, *I* always say.



The Drum

Owen SauerLender

BRIGHT stars in a satin sky half-hid, half-seen through the crowding trees beside the road. White limestone gravel, pale in the dark starlight, sharp and shifting under my hurrying feet. I follow the mountain road that twists carefully down the steep hillside, hear the hoarse whispers of the amorous tree toads, feel the throbbing pulse-beat of a distant native drum.

The drum seems nearer, and my feet move faster as the rhythm quickens, hurrying me along. Now the road is brighter, and the mountains rise on either side of a level clearing. The throbbing fills the air, beats in the dark bodies of the native boys swaying in a tight circle around the flaming torch and the beating drum.

Weird moving shadows and beams of light reach out from the dancing circle and are lost in the blackness about the clearing.

Someone drops out, and for a moment I see the intent body of the drummer bent above the drum steadily beating with both bare hands, see the white of his fixed eyes, gleaming in the flickering torch-light.

The throbbing stops, and for a long moment all is still. Someone laughs and the spell is broken.